

# 30 Fantastic Volunteer Retention Ideas



Identifier	MGT EXPO 215
Class Length	1 hour and 15 minutes

## Change Summary

September 1, 2006	Updated Lesson Plan Format
September 2008	Lesson Plan Updated
December 2011	Lesson Plan and PPP updated
December 2012	Reviewed and Revised
December 2013	Reviewed and Revised
September 2014	Reviewed and Revised
December 2014	Finalized and Posted

# 30 Fantastic Volunteer Retention Ideas

## 1. Lesson Plan Goals

To share with attendees the tools and ideas to make the retention of volunteers achievable

## 2. Class Length

1 hour and 15 minutes

## 3. Instructor Requirements

Management Instructor

Advanced Management Instructor at AYSO EXPOs

## 4. Learning Objectives

- Recruiting volunteers is the first step.
- The second step is to motivate volunteers to return next year

## 5. Prerequisites

None

## 6. Materials

None

## 7. Equipment

Power Point presentation

Computer

LCD Projector

Screen (optional)

Flip chart and markers

## 8. Special Instructor Notes

*30 Fantastic Volunteer Recruitment Ideas* workshop is a precedent to this workshop so this is like a sequel. It is a sharing of ideas and can work with any size group.

*Instructor notes below will appear below in italics.*

# 30 Fantastic Volunteer Retention Ideas

## I. Introduction – Slide #1 is up as topic introduction

Introduce yourself as workshop leader, your topic and your co-instructors.

**Instructor note** - *When you are doing this workshop at an Area Meeting or for a new Region, the age of the Region and the experience level of the participants may come into play. You might find that in some cases you are doing most of the sharing of ideas. Be as enthusiastic as you can. This is an exciting subject, which will greatly benefit every Region. Encourage participation and offer your solutions and ideas only when they are finished contributing. As you look at the participants in the workshop, realize that every one of them has an idea, a thought, a suggestion or a success story to share. It is your job as an instructor to pull that information out.*

## II Body

### Slide #2 - 3 Idea #1

Let's get the most obvious idea out of the way:

#### **Reward their effort**

What kinds of things can you give volunteers to reward them?

**Instructor note:** *The satisfaction that is provided by a pin, patch, shirt, jacket or hat is honestly beyond reason. AYSO volunteers are literally paid in this wampum. This "salary" is extremely important. It should never be overlooked that volunteers desire these rewards, if only to be kept in honored places, recognizing their efforts. Just remember any gift unless accompanied by a sincere "look them in the eye" thank you loses its effectiveness. Parties, special events, and other ceremonies are often just the right finishing touch to a major Regional effort.*

### Slide #3 True or False

**These gifts alone keep volunteers coming back.**

*For the purpose of this workshop we will assume that rewarding volunteers with gifts is a good thing, but if it is the only action that you are taking, it is not enough to keep volunteers.*

*Time is important to all volunteers. They need to feel that the time they are giving to AYSO is appreciated.*

### Slide #4 False!

All volunteers need to feel that their efforts are appreciated!

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## Slide #5 Idea #2: Match the reward to the person.

Give us some ideas.

**Instructor note:** *AYSO shirts might be a great gift for your Coaches and Referees but should your Regional Board Members receive something special or at least given in a special way?*

## Slide #6

Picture of volunteers.

## Slide #7 Idea #3: Make new volunteers feel welcome.

- When do you start?
- What are some ways to do this?

**Instructor note:** *Ask Board Members to work as ambassadors to find, reach out, and thank all volunteers personally. Welcoming new volunteers should start the minute they are recruited, especially if this is at registration. Other ideas:*

- *Send the RC over to shake the hand of every new volunteer, or ring a bell whenever a volunteer is recruited. You have begun the message that "Volunteers are Special".*
- *Have your Regional Board connect with volunteers on game day. They are the ambassadors for your AYSO Region. Buy shirts for all your Regional Board so that they are easily identified. On game day (or practices) encourage all of them to shake hands and say: "Thanks for volunteering!"*

## Slide # 8 Idea #4: (put all of the questions on the slide) Manage your Region with your heart not your head

Answer these questions and give some additional ideas.

## Slide # 9 – 12 Which is better?

- A pat on the back and a sincere thank you versus reading a list of names of people you want to thank.
- Offering a spontaneous show of appreciation or a plaque given at the end of the season
- An RC taking all new Regional Board Members out to lunch or buying a lunch gift certificate
- Writing a sincere, heartfelt thank-you note sent in the mail versus a standard form email sent out to all volunteers

**Instructor note:** *Managing with your heart means treating volunteers like investments not expenses. It means acting less like a boss and more like an equal. When it comes to recognizing and motivating your "keepers" the little things will make a difference.*

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## **Slide # 13 Idea # 5: Know your volunteers as parents, spouses, community leaders, people with interesting hobbies, etc.**

Give us some ideas

- *Know your volunteers as parents, spouses, community leaders, people with interesting hobbies, etc.*
- *Ask them about their families, jobs or hobbies.*

**Instructor note:** *When you get to know your volunteers as people, you establish emotional ties that are the root of high retention. When you look past the job title to the person, you make employees feel as if they're somehow more than the disposable cogs in the machine.*

*Regional Commissioners: Keep a file on each Regional Board Member and use it to store information on children, spouses, wedding anniversaries, hobbies, outside interests and so on. At Regional Board meetings use this information to recognize and highlight volunteers.*

## **Slide #14 Idea #6: Train your volunteers**

**Instructor note:**

- *Is training just for coaches and referees? No. Every volunteer will feel better prepared in their jobs and gain greater satisfaction for their effort if they are properly trained.*
- *Give us some ideas for innovative training for volunteers*
- *Put trained volunteer names in a newsletter. Positive peer pressure (reinforcement) works*
- *Give volunteers a pin after they have attended training. Encourage volunteers to wear their pin on game days. The pin might say, "I am a trained AYSO volunteer"*
- *How about training Team Parents early on a game day so that they don't have to give up yet another Saturday or week night?*
- *Give them certificates and thank them for taking the time to get trained.*

**Slide # 15 Idea #7: Accentuate the positive. “Catch volunteers doing something good”**

Give us 2 - 3 ideas

**Instructor note:**

- *Regional Commissioners – at the start of every Regional Board meeting ask each Board Member to take 30 seconds and tell something they are proud of doing since the last meeting. Keep the pace fast so that it is fun. Give a little reward (a dollar store prize) for the best activity.*
- *Regional Board Members – on game day when you see something happening that is a great example of the AYSO philosophies, go up and say “Thank you.”*

**Slide # 16 Idea #8**

**Change the “Volunteer of the Year” and go to “Volunteer of the Moment, Day or Week”.**

Can you think of ways to recognize more than one volunteer?

**Instructor note:**

- *While one volunteer will be thrilled with the “Volunteer of the Year”, you’ might have to contend with dozens of disappointed “losers”.*
- *No matter how fair your judging process is, you’ll be hard-pressed to avoid feelings of favoritism from deserving volunteers who don’t win.*
- *A better alternative is to give spontaneous, immediate praise wherever and whenever it’s deserved.*
- *This is a warmer, more personal way to relate to the volunteers in your Region.*
- *This method allows for recognizing many volunteers.*

**Slide #17 Idea # 9: Survey your Volunteers**

Who could you survey?

What kind of questions could you ask?

What is the benefit?

**Instructor note:**

- *Make sure the survey is anonymous. You’re more likely to get honest feedback.*
- *Share the findings – good or bad – with survey volunteers. It will help to foster an atmosphere of open dialogue.*
- *Implement as many volunteer suggestions as possible. For those that are not implemented, explain the reasons.*
- *Continue to conduct the same survey every year.*

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## Slide #18 Idea # 10: Praise beyond your own Region.

- How could you get your Area Director or Area Staff involved in praising or thanking volunteers?
- How would receiving praise from the Area level make a volunteer feel?

### ***Instructor note:***

*Contact your AD, ACA or ARA and discuss an exemplary Regional Board Member and request that they call, email or snail mail a quick “thank you for doing a great job for AYSO.”*

## Slide #19 Idea # 11: You can’t lead by email alone.

- Give three ideas on the types of acknowledgements, thank you messages or volunteer praises that might be better done by a method of communication other than email.
- Why is email communication not always the best way to retain volunteers?

## Slide # 20 Idea # 12: Practice what you preach.

### Slide # 21 – Preach the AYSO Philosophies

- We preach the AYSO philosophies. Give an example of how each of the six AYSO philosophies exemplifies volunteer retention.
- How could you use these ideas?

### Slide # 22 - 27

- Everyone Plays® – Every volunteer is important.
- Balanced Teams – We need to thank acknowledge and reward every volunteer, not just the coaches and referees. It is the “balance” of all the volunteers doing their jobs that makes a Region successful.
- Open Registration – Every parent should volunteer in some way. Volunteering is not just for a few people
- Positive Coaching – If we expect parents to volunteer and stay with AYSO year, then we (the RC and Regional Board) have to be positive role models.
- Good Sportsmanship – One of the secrets of keeping volunteers is to let them occasionally get together to “play”. Volunteers need to feel that they are part of a team.
- Player Development - It is just as important to train and develop volunteers as it is players. Volunteers need to have training and support to be successful.

## Slide #28 Idea #13: Give Volunteers Options

### Don't ever ask a question you may not like the answer to.

- What kind of options could you give volunteers that might make them stay longer?
- What kinds of questions don't you want to ask volunteers?

#### **Instructor note:**

- *Say to a volunteer that you feel is getting frustrated with a job they are currently doing: "We don't want to lose you. You are valuable to us. Would you like to do another job in the Region? Here are some options."*
- *We don't ever want to ask a volunteer: "Do you still want to be a coach?" Instead say: "We are so excited about having you as a coach again. You did such a good job!" or "We are so excited about having you as our Registrar again this year and we are going to help you be even more successful than last year."*
- *What kind of options could you give volunteers that might make them stay longer? (Different positions? Job sharing responsibilities, training...)*

## Slide #29 Idea #14: Respect your Volunteer's Time

- How can you lessen the amount of time your Regional Board Members have to devote to their AYSO volunteer positions?
- What are some time management suggestions you as an RC could give volunteers to help them?

#### **Instructor note:**

*Have each Regional Board Member make a list of 10 things that they do as part of their AYSO job description. The next step is to ask them to name at least three to four things on the list that they could delegate to someone else.*

## Slide #30 Idea #15: Recruit the Right People

- What are some positive qualities that you would look for in recruiting volunteers?
- What are the qualities you would want in volunteers you hope will stay with AYSO?

#### **Instructor note:**

- *When recruiting volunteers look for a positive attitude, people who like to have fun, have a good work ethic, someone who says, "I love AYSO".*
- *You don't want anyone who gets easily discouraged when things go wrong. A cheery, upbeat, enthusiastic Regional Board is one of the best selling points to keep your volunteers involved for the long haul. Each Board Member needs to realize that they set the tone for the*

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*attitude of all the volunteers who work with them. If a Registrar is anxious and unprepared for registration and makes everyone feel that he/she cannot wait for the process to be over, how excited do you think the workers at registration will be?*

### **Slide #31 Idea #16: Remember the Spouses.**

Does your Region involve spouses in any way?

#### ***Instructor note:***

*Volunteers give up a great deal of free time for their AYSO volunteer commitment. It is important to remember that volunteers often have spouses and/or children who are not involved in AYSO but are still supportive and understanding of the time and effort it takes to be a volunteer. Here are three tips on this topic:*

- *If you are a Regional Commissioner, make it a point to write down (if you can't remember) the spouses' names for everyone on your Regional Board. When you call and they answer the phone it is a nice touch to personalize your conversation by taking a few seconds to say hello using their name.*
- *When planning a "thank you" event, remember to invite the spouses. One Regional Commissioner hosted an end of the year party to recognize all the dedicated Board Members. All spouses were invited. At the dinner he said that he had gifts for all the people who worked hard to make the season so successful. All the Board Members sat right up waiting for their gifts. **Instead**, he presented a gift to each of the spouses with a personalized thank you for their patience, tolerance, cooperation, and their generosity in sharing their spouses with AYSO.*
- *Invite spouses to attend the AYSO EXPO. The benefit is that the spouses will feel a part of the "team". Many of these spouses, who have never volunteered before, might become interested in being a part of this family friendly organization.*

*Ask the participants if they know the first name of the spouses on their Regional Board.*

### **Slide #32 Idea #17: Encourage each Board Member to develop a "TEAM" concept for the volunteers who work with them.**

- How will this get more volunteers involved?
- How will this help with volunteer retention?

#### ***Instructor note: Make volunteering meaningful.***

- *Keep your volunteers by balancing the busy work with meaningful jobs and responsibilities.*

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- *Include them in your Region's planning and decision-making so that they have a vested interest in the future of the program.*
- *Have a registration team, made up of all the faithful workers, or a field maintenance team that meets once a year for a planning session. Make this as social an event as possible. Serve pizza at a church hall, followed by a planning meeting.*
- *Give each member of the team some small project or something to report on. This will make each member of the team feel needed. This is a great way to divide your job up and delegate to other people. Notice who performs well and be sure to reward with praise.*

## **Slide #33 Idea # 18: Whenever possible, recognize volunteers in a public way in front of their peers**

- Give us your three best ideas.
- At what other events could recognition take place? It doesn't always have to be at an AYSO function.

***Instructor note:*** *At a community event, an AYSO function or at half time at a high school soccer game, ask permission to honor one or several key volunteers. It will give you a chance to publicly praise their efforts. Put information in the local paper acknowledging the volunteer.*

## **Slide #34 Idea #19: Talk about volunteers in a positive way behind their back.**

Nothing pleases a volunteer than to hear that their special efforts were mentioned at a Regional Board meeting or at a coaches or referee meeting. Any ideas?

## **Slide #35 Idea # 20 Don't deceive volunteers**

- What kinds of things are RCs and Regional Board Members likely to stretch the truth about?
- How does this make volunteers feel?

***Instructor note:*** *If you have asked a volunteer to do a job that requires a good deal of time and responsibility, tell them. They will respect your honesty. Supply job descriptions for all jobs. Don't say a job is an easy, quick one if it isn't. The fastest way to lose a volunteer is by misleading them about the responsibility. When a volunteer is taking over for someone who is leaving, give the new person some leeway in adding their own personal touch to the job while still adhering to the job description. Recognize improvements to the job responsibility.*

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*Will you lose some potential volunteers with this honest approach? Possibly, but when you do recruit someone, they will understand what they have agreed to do and might stay longer. More importantly, they will get the job done.*

### **Slide #36 Idea # 21**

#### **Start and end meetings on time**

- Why is this important to volunteer retention?
- What kinds of things can you do to insure that meetings do start and end on time?

***Instructor note:*** *This may seem like a minor point, but volunteers who arrive on time are always frustrated by having to wait for the late arrivers. Board meetings are a great volunteer retention opportunity. Be organized, so that you don't waste anyone's time. At some point in the season, find some part of each Board Member's job that they do exceptionally well and ask that they report on it. Or ask that they report on a project that went quite well. This is peer recognition.*

*How many of you have been on time for a meeting and sat there waiting for others to come? How did that make you feel?*

### **Slide #37 Idea # 22**

#### **Don't expect volunteers to stay long if you are always operating in a "crisis management" atmosphere.**

- What do we mean by "Crisis Management" in running a Region?
- *What is the alternative to this type of attitude?*

***Instructor note:*** *The average person has enough stress in their life; this volunteer job should be fun. Anticipate and discuss problems ahead of time. Be proactive in your leadership. A realistic approach to a volunteer job allows for expected problems and keeps volunteers calm and ready to handle whatever happens. No one wants to be in a chaotic situation for too long.*

*Success sells. People want to be a part of something that is successful. The Region with its act together will have an easier time retaining its best people.*

*What would be some examples of "crisis management"?*

### **Slide #38 Idea # 23**

#### **Don't recruit more volunteers than you need.**

- What does this have to do with volunteer retention?
- How would you feel if you volunteered and then you never received a call?

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**Instructor note:** A volunteer, who is never called to do a job they signed up for, probably will never sign up again. As you improve your recruiting process, discuss ways to divide job responsibilities and use every volunteer. If for some reason you cannot use a volunteer in the position they volunteered for, call them and explain the situation. At that time you might be able to recruit them for another position. They deserve this courtesy.

## Slide #39- 40 Idea # 24

### Help volunteers develop a succession plan.

- Can you discuss succession planning and still retain volunteers?
- Why even discuss it?
- Won't it make volunteers start thinking about leaving?

#### **Instructor note:**

At an "end of the season" Board meeting, take the time to thank everyone for doing such a great job. State that you hope that everyone will be returning for the next season. Explain that if any one of them will not be returning, now is the time to let the Board know. This will give the entire Board a chance to discuss a possible replacement. The last thing you want is to find out two weeks before the season that one of your key volunteers will not be returning. Pass out the succession plan flier. Give each of them a few minutes to fill it out. No discussion is needed at that time. As an RC, you might want to discuss their answers privately.

Filling out this form is proactive management. Volunteers get very nervous if they think they have signed on for life. They are likely to stay longer if they know they have the opportunity to "sign a yearly contract."

Don't avoid the subject of succession planning. This flier will also give you some idea if the Board Member has delegated responsibility and developed a "TEAM." If they have no idea how to answer the last question, you will know there is a potential problem.

## Slide # 41 Idea # 25

### Always debrief at the end of the season or after an event

- What are the advantages of doing this?
- How does it make volunteers feel?
- Will they stay with AYSO longer?

#### **Instructor note:**

After every event do a debriefing. This will give you immediate feedback and reveal a lot about what the volunteers are thinking and feeling. Everyone likes knowing their

*opinions are valued and you can get a head start on problem solving and planning for the next time.*

## Slide #42

### Here's a good idea:

*Have a "**We Survived Registration**" lunch after the last day of registration. Remember to invite all the workers from previous registration days. Make sure they know this is a "thank you" for their effort in this most important process.*

*The side benefit of this get together is that it can serve as a debriefing to discuss what worked and what could be improved. It is also an excellent opportunity to recruit for next year. "Jean, you did a terrific job greeting parents as they entered registration, would you do that for us again next year?" **This is volunteer retention, tied in with recruiting.***

## Slide #43 Idea # 26

### Say "Please" and "Thank You"

- Why is this important?
- How will it make volunteers feel?

#### **Instructor note:**

*Respect your volunteers – ask, do not command.*

**Take the time to say thank you to all the volunteers who help you, mentioning that you hope they will be available to help next year.**

- When should you say thank you?
- To whom?
- What does this have to do with volunteer retention?
- What is the two best ways to say thank you?

#### **Instructor note:**

*Have you ever received a thank you note for something you have done? How much better did it feel than an e-mail or a group "thank you?" Remember that feeling and pass it on. When you write the note try to mention one personal compliment that would pertain only to that volunteer.*

*Give out some small gift to all the workers at registration. As you give the gift, look them in the eye, shake their hand and say: "Thank you so much for helping us out. You did a great job. I hope you will help us next year."*

**Slide #44 Idea # 27**

**Provide something that either youth or adult volunteers need.**

**Slide #45**

- What could you give teenage volunteers that would help them in their college acceptance?
- What could you do for volunteers that might help them professionally?

**Instructor note:**

***Offer to be a reference when teenagers are applying for a job.** Employers are looking for young people with the qualities you can attest to: dependability, positive attitude, ability to deal with difficult situations and to be a positive role model. If you have older children, do you remember when they needed a reference and it couldn't be a relative? At times it is difficult for them to call and request a reference from an adult. You are being proactive and making the offer. This works best if you can speak to each young volunteer individually. It makes them feel very special. If you don't have the time to do this very important job, it is one that should be delegated. It takes a minimum amount of time to set it up.*

*You can do the same type of thing for your adult volunteers. Send letters of appreciation to their employers. Always ask permission first.*

**Slide #46 Idea # 28**

**Keep it fun and volunteers will return.**

- What are three fun things you could do with or for your volunteers?
- Why is this important?

**Slide #47 Idea # 29**

**Bring your Regional Board Members to an AYSO EXPO.**

- *What are the benefits of doing this?*
- *How will it help with volunteer retention?*

AYSO EXPOs offer continuing education opportunities to help volunteers develop greater skills. They also have a chance to share ideas with other volunteers and usually leave feeling that they are part of the larger AYSO community. It is also a great recognition opportunity.

**Slide #48 Idea # 30**

**Start a Regional Hall of Fame.**

This could be maintained on your website. The Hall of Fame can recognize any volunteer or player who has made a significant contribution to soccer and AYSO at the Regional, Area, Section or National level.

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**Slide #49 Idea # 31**

Recognize a different volunteer at the concession stand or on the field every week. Put a sign up that says: "Find John Buckley, shake his hand and thank him for being an AYSO volunteer." Secretly get a picture to put up next to his name.

**Slide #50 Conclusion****Slide #51**

- We all deserve a thank you for our volunteer efforts – give thanks freely.
- Establish an active plan to reward your volunteers – it's their "pay."
- Regardless of your position, you set the tone for all those volunteers who work with you.
- Remember, everyone is important.
- Keep it fun and volunteers will return.

**Slide #52**

- *Have attendees email additional ideas for retaining volunteers to [management@ayso.org](mailto:management@ayso.org).*

**Slide #53** Thank you for attending!

## Even More Volunteer Retention Ideas

- Coach Gift Idea – take pictures of the team throughout the season and create a poster/collage to give to the coach at the end of the season. The coach might not have an opportunity to take pictures while coaching and will love the gift.
- Put the Region's website ID on T-shirts, pens, etc.
- Cook for your Regional Board – or plan a cook-out and have everyone bring something.
- Send out Holiday/Birthday/Anniversary cards to your Board.
- When the season is over Board Members call key volunteers to thank them.
- When doing surveys don't just ask what the problems are – ask for solutions. Give a prize for the best solution.
- Put recognition in local newspapers.